

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) holds its 95th Session in Vienna

Chewing coca leaf and use of opioids for pain treatment among issues being discussed

VIENNA, 14 May (UN Information Service) – How to ensure the availability of drugs for medical purposes is one of the main issues to be covered by the International Narcotics Control Board, which is holding its 95th session in Vienna until 22 May.

Currently, consumption of opioids which are needed in the treatment of pain is very low in many countries despite the fact that there are enough supplies of opiate raw materials to cover demand. This situation is due to several regulatory, economic and knowledge impediments.

To address this issue, INCB is reviewing the outcome of the joint expert group meeting with the World Health Organization, which aims to assist Governments in establishing more realistic estimates of requirements for medications containing internationally controlled substances. The group met on 7 and 8 May 2009 at Vienna.

In addition, INCB is reviewing overall treaty compliance of more than 200 states and territories. Over 95 per cent of the United Nations Member States, representing 99 per cent of the world's population, are parties to the international drug control treaties.

The current session is also considering the issue of coca leaf. In line with the provisions of the 1961 Convention on Narcotic Drugs, coca leaf should only be used for medical or scientific purposes and for the preparation of a flavouring agent. Coca leaf chewing should have come to an end in 1989. The Board is examining various aspects of the issue to analyse the situation and continues its open dialogue with the Governments concerned.

On precursor chemicals, which are used for the illicit manufacture of drugs, INCB reviews the ongoing international initiatives targeting the trafficking in chemicals as well as other activities to facilitate Government actions to defeat criminal organizations.

The Board carries out missions to support countries in their drug control efforts and to enable direct contact with their authorities. During the 95th session the Board is examining the outcome of missions to Angola, Australia, Finland, Syrian Arab Republic and the Vatican.

The Board is also reviewing the results of the most important events of the inter-sessional period such as the outcome of High-Level Segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, of the Special Conference on Afghanistan and of the commemoration of the centennial of the convening of the International Opium Commission as well as the reactions to the launch of its annual report.

Through its Standing Committee on Estimates, the Board is reviewing the worldwide supply and demand of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes.

The Vienna-based INCB is an independent body, established by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs to monitor and promote Governments' compliance with the international drug control treaties. Its 13 members are elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The current president of the Board is Sevil Atasoy (Turkey). Its members are: Joseph Bediako Asare (Ghana), Tatyana Borisovna Dmitrieva (Russian Federation), Phillip O. Emafo (Nigeria), Hamid Ghodse (Iran), Carola Lander (Germany), Melvyn Levitsky (United States), Maria-Elena Medina-Mora (Mexico), Sri Suryawati (Indonesia), Camilo Uribe Granja (Colombia), Brian Watters (Australia), Raymond Yans (Belgium) and Xin Yu (China).